

WHAT ARE MOLDS?

Molds are simple, microscopic organisms that are found everywhere. They reproduce by forming spores, which are very small and lightweight, making it easy for them to travel through the air. Mold spores are almost always present in outdoor and indoor air. All mold needs to grow and produce spores is a food source (leaves, wood, paper, dirt), a surface to grow on, and moisture. Moisture is the most important, because without moisture, mold can't grow. You do not have to have standing water for mold to grow. The humidity in the air can provide enough moisture for molds to grow.

Mold is basically like a plant and like all plants, mold has roots. What we see on the surface of an object are the stalk and spores. The roots extend into the object and can't be seen. Unless the roots are killed, the mold will grow back. It is important not just to clean the surface, but to kill the roots as well.

WHAT PROBLEMS DO MOLDS CAUSE?

When molds are present in a home, they can cause allergic reactions. The most common symptoms are runny nose, eye and skin irritation, cough, congestion and trigger asthma.

Molds can cause structural damage to your home leading to costly repairs and could reduce the value.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE A MOLD PROBLEM IN MY HOME?

If you can see mold or can smell an earthy or musty odor, you can assume you have a mold problem. Anytime you have water stains, standing water or a moist surface, expect mold growth. The first thing to do is to find and clean up the mold. **Equally important is to find and remove the source of moisture.**

FINDING THE MOLD

Mold is found in places where there is a lot of water or condensation, such as under a leaking sink, damp basements or the tracks of poorly insulated windows. Once the source of moisture is found, fix the leak and dry the area as quickly as possible. Some places to look for mold:

- Anywhere there has been a recent water leak.
- Surfaces in a room where water condenses. These are usually the outside walls.
- Air humidifiers.
- Sides of walls near the floor, behind the baseboards and under the carpeting.
- Drip pans of refrigerators.
- Along window tracks.
- In the dirt of indoor plants.
- Along the bottoms of drapes or curtains.



WHAT DO I NEED TO DISCARD?

If mold is found on something that is porous or easily absorbs water, such as ceiling tile, mattresses, overstuffed furniture or carpet, consider discarding and replacing the item. Many times it is much more cost effective to discard the item than to spend the time and effort cleaning it to a safe level. If something is badly water stained and smells of mold, discard it. Moldy items may be discarded by placing them into a plastic bag and discarding the bag in the trash.



WHAT CAN I CLEAN?

If mold is found on a non-porous or semi-porous surface, it can usually be cleaned. Below are some guidelines on cleaning mold:

- Use non-ammonia soap, detergent or a commercial cleaner in hot water.

- Thoroughly scrub all contaminated surfaces. Use a stiff brush to clean concrete blocks, wood, walls and other semi-porous surfaces with the soap/detergent to remove the mold at the surface.
- Rinse with clean water and remove the excess water.
- After cleaning, wet the surface of the object with a solution of 1 cup of bleach per gallon of water. The surface should be wet, but without run off.

**Never mix bleach with ammonia.
The fumes are toxic!**

- Allow the bleach solution to dry naturally, allowing the bleach solution to sink down to the roots of the mold. Extended contact time is important to kill the mold. Be sure to ventilate the room well while the surfaces are drying!

If the mold returns, repeat the above steps using a solution of 1½ cups of bleach to a gallon of water.

PROTECT YOURSELF


Do not assume that just because you cleaned mold from the front of a surface that the back is clean as well. Mold is often found inside walls, under and in carpet padding, and under vinyl wall coverings.

- Bleach can irritate your eyes, nose and throat. Ventilate the working area well by opening doors and windows. Use fans that blow the air to the outside.
- Wear clothing that can be easily cleaned or discarded.
- Wear rubber gloves and eye protection.
- Consider using a respirator or mask.



- Ask mold sensitive family members to leave the areas being cleaned.

TIPS FOR KEEPING MOLD OUT OF YOUR HOME:

- Inspect your home, inside and out, for evidence of water damage and visible mold.
- Fix leaky plumbing and other sources of water. 
- Use exhaust fans vented to the outside or open windows in kitchens and bathrooms when showering, cooking or using the dishwasher.
- Keep the relative humidity of your home at 60% or less. Increase the temperature to dry out the air and open the windows to provide ventilation whenever possible.
- Make sure the dryer is vented to the outside.
- Change heating and air conditioning filters often.
- Leave lids open, especially on washing machines, insulated coolers, etc.
- Thoroughly dry wet items as quickly as possible – within 24 to 48 hours.
- Do not place rubber backed mats or carpets on concrete floors, especially in basements.
- Do not carpet bathrooms or kitchens.
- Make sure that your lawn sprinklers are not spraying the sides of your home.
- Make sure your yard drains or slopes away from your home to avoid water collecting in the crawl spaces and around foundation
- Keep the rain gutters clear of debris, which could force the water to take a different route – down the walls of your home.
- Paints with mold inhibitors are available. Ask your paint supplier about this option.

TESTING

It is not necessary to have molds tested to determine what kind it is. If you have mold, you have a problem and it doesn't matter what kind it is. Testing can be very expensive and the results are vague because there are no set standards for mold levels. You are much better off putting that money into the clean up and removal of the mold and to repair the damage it caused.

Facts About MOLD IN THE HOME



For more information or advice:

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